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ABSTRACT

This report describes the findings concerning the implementation of the literacy component of the First Steps program, which provides additional support for development of literacy and numeracy among "at-risk" students, in English Language and Numeracy (ELAN) schools (those with a high proportion of aboriginal students) in Western Australia. Data were gathered in a survey of 150 schools and case studies of 12 schools. The program was commonly seen to have a lot to offer children regarded as "at-risk" for any reason. While many respondents praised the program enthusiastically, a wide range of opinion was found. Overall, parents, principals, teachers, and "Focus Teachers" all found that: teachers in ELAN schools were generally more positive about all aspects of the program than teachers; ELAN schools generally made similar or greater progress than schools not participating in the First Steps project; and teachers in ELAN schools found the program more relevant and having a more positive effect on student language attitudes, confidence, and skills. (MSE)

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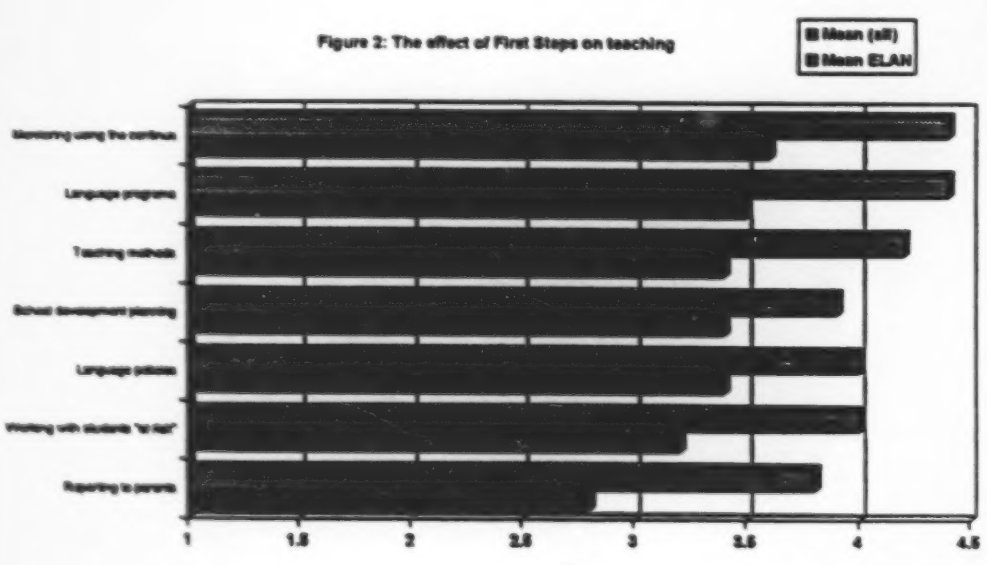
ED 419 422

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LITERACY COMPONENT OF THE FIRST STEPS PROJECT IN ELAN SCHOOLS

(Schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal students)

Figure 2: The effect of First Steps on teaching



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Editor's Note

This document is one of a series of reports that document the formative research that supported the creation and development of *First Steps*™. As a result of this research, the Education Department of Western Australia (EDWA), in collaboration with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) revised *First Steps* in response to each of the issues and questions raised by this research. *First Steps* training courses, Developmental Continua, and Resource Books are published with due amendments and alterations.

Other research documents that support the development of *First Steps* include:

Dr. Phil Deschamp:

- A Survey of the Implementation of the Literacy Component of the *First Steps* Project in WA
- The Implementation of The Literacy Component of The *First Steps* Project in ELAN Schools
- A Survey of the Effectiveness of the Focus Teacher 'B' Training for the *First Steps* Project
- Student Achievement: A Study of the Effects of *First Steps* Teaching on Student Achievement
- Case Studies of The Implementation of the *First Steps* Project in Twelve Schools
- The Development and Implementation of the *First Steps* Project in Western Australia

ACER:

- Empirical Validation of the *First Steps* Reading Continuum
- Empirical Validation of the *First Steps* Spelling and Writing Continua
- Empirical Re-Validation of the *First Steps* Spelling Continuum
- Assessment and Record of the Changes made to the Spelling Continuum
- The Impact of *First Steps* on Schools and Teachers
- The Impact of *First Steps* on the Reading and Writing Ability of Year 5 Students
- Background: *First Steps* and the ACER Evaluation & Report on the Validity of the *First Steps* Writing and Spelling Continua*

EDWA:

- Supporting Linguistic and Cultural Diversity Through *First Steps*: The Highgate Project

For more information about on-going *First Steps* research, please contact:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Projects

This report describes the findings regarding the implementation of First Steps in ELAN schools, (i.e. Schools with high numbers of Aboriginal students). The information was gathered from a survey of 150 schools and case studies of 12 schools in the First Steps project.

Both studies asked principals, teachers and parents about the extent to which First Steps was operating in the school, and what they considered had happened as a result.

Results

It was surprising how many case study interviews finished with an emotional statement such as:

Great program! I love it.

If one were to select the teacher comments which best captured the prevailing (but by no means unanimous) attitude towards the experience of working with First Steps, they would be:

- *It has reminded us that teaching does not equal learning, and that we must move at a pace the child can handle.*
- *If you follow First Steps procedures there is success and children feel it and confidence grows. Nothing succeeds like success.*
- *It was the first quality professional development I've ever had.*

In noting the findings of the case studies it should be remembered that the information gathered in these 12 schools, selected as having made successful progress with implementing First Steps, included every possible shade of opinion.

First Steps was commonly stated as having a lot to offer children regarded as *at risk* for whatever reason. The data from ELAN case study schools shown above has illustrated the enthusiasm for the First Steps program shown by teachers in ELAN schools and the conviction they had that it had assisted their task in major ways. Yet the range of views across teachers in other schools was extreme.

It's no good for Aboriginal children.
It works particularly well with Aboriginal students.

The data from the survey of 150 schools provides a broader base from which to consider these perspectives and is able to show the balance of support between the perspectives. The summary of the results from ELAN case study schools shows that:

The four data sets: parents, principals, teachers and Focus Teachers all deliver the same message. They say that:

- **teachers in ELAN schools were even more positive about the value of all aspects of the First Steps professional development than teachers generally.**

- **teachers in ELAN schools valued all aspects of the First Steps model even more highly than teachers generally.**

- **teachers in ELAN schools *gave higher ratings than teachers generally to all aspects of the impact of First Steps on their teaching.* This suggests that they considered that First Steps had particular relevance to teaching children who needed extra assistance with learning English.**

- **ELAN schools had made similar or greater progress than schools generally with regard to the extent to which the First Steps literacy programme has been implemented. The greatest differences were in Writing and Reading, where ELAN schools claimed substantially more progress with implementation than schools generally.**

- **principals in ELAN schools give higher ratings than principals generally to the impact of each aspect of the First Steps Literacy programme on student learning.**

- **teachers in ELAN schools gave similar positive ratings to teachers generally to the effects of First Steps on student attitude to and confidence in language.**

- **teachers in ELAN schools give similar or higher positive ratings to teachers generally to the impact of First Steps on students' use of each of the language strategies listed.**

The above five data sets all support the conclusion that First Steps strategies work even more successfully in ELAN schools than in schools generally.

FOREWORD

THE ELAN PROJECT

The English Language and Numeracy Project (ELAN) commenced in mid 1991 when the Education Department recognised that many Aboriginal students continued to be 'at risk' and needed specific educational support in addition to the resources offered by First Steps. There was also a need for Western Australia to address goals established through the Aboriginal Education Operational Plan, in particular:

> *To enable Aboriginal attainment of skills to the same standard as other Australian students throughout the compulsory years of schoolings.*

ELAN's support strategy involved the allocation of part-time or full-time teachers in primary schools with high enrolments of Aboriginal students. There was also a proviso that participating schools had completed some or all components of First Steps and that the ELAN resource was linked to either a literacy or numeracy priority in the School Development Plan.

The ELAN project offers additional and sustained school support and this may, in part, explain why First Steps was perceived as being more successful in ELAN schools. In general, the First Steps project did not have the resources to appoint teachers long term to designated schools. However, the ELAN project was able to offer a part-time or full-time teacher, above the staffing allocation, to schools with high enrolments of Aboriginal students. For example, some schools have had an ELAN teacher for the three years since their initial completion of First Steps professional development. In this context, the ELAN teacher has had the time to support and monitor the implementation of First Steps and to ensure that the resource becomes part of established teaching practice.

Another contributing factor is that ELAN teachers are offered ongoing professional development beyond the literacy and numeracy components of First Steps. It is widely recognised that low literacy or numeracy levels may be influenced by considerations beyond classroom practices, and this is particularly true for Aboriginal students. To help address the needs of the 'whole child' ELAN teachers receive additional training or information in areas such as Aboriginal language and culture, Aboriginal health issues, working with Aboriginal Education Workers, increasing parent participation and working collaboratively with teachers. Essentially, First Steps provides the strategies to ensure successful teaching and learning, and the ELAN teacher helps to establish the environment and support mechanisms to ensure ongoing success. This may involve the ELAN teacher becoming a mentor for the Aboriginal Education Worker, participating in homework classes, running parent workshops or helping teachers implement health programs. In other schools many of these tasks are 'extra duties' taken on by the general staff. In ELAN schools they are part of a planned strategy which is incorporated into the ELAN teacher's role.

The last factor relates to beliefs about teaching and learning. First Steps is built on the principle that 'at risk' students are best supported within a whole-class model of teaching rather than through withdrawal classes organised by a remedial or support teacher.

Historically, many schools have attempted to 'remediate' Aboriginal students in programs where they are taken from classrooms for part of the day. Given the continued failure rates of Aboriginal students before the introduction of First Steps, there is little evidence to show that withdrawal is a successful teaching strategy, and a lot of evidence to show that it inculcates failure. To bring about a change in philosophy, First Steps has provided professional development and resources to help teachers plan programs for all students within the mainstream class. The ELAN project has added another dimension by appointing a skilled teacher toprovide the time and support needed to bring about change. In non-ELAN schools there has not been such a concerted effort, or the resources, to address the withdrawal/in-class support issue. However, in terms of literacy outcomes, a focus on in-class support seems to have had a marked effect on learning. In particular, teachers in ELAN schools claim that the First Steps approach, with ELAN support, has brought about significant improvements in literacy development, with notable achievements in the areas of writing and reading.

Thus, First Steps may be seem to be more successful in ELAN schools because there has been a unified effort to move away from traditional approaches to teaching 'at risk' students. In addition, the ELAN teacher has been well-placed to influence and monitor developments in teaching practice, and help other teachers build onto identified success.

Jenny Evans
ELAN co-ordinator
1994

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Preface

The First Steps project

The First Steps project emerged in 1988 in response to a growing perception in schools and the Central Office of the Education Department that many children who were experiencing difficulties in learning Literacy were not having their needs adequately met. Increasing awareness of the difficulties experienced by these children, coupled with their increasing numbers in their local schools due to increasing acceptance of the policy of *mainstreaming* children with learning difficulties had caused a ground swell demand for professional development for teachers on better ways of assisting these children.

Earlier responses to this perceived area of need had included major professional development initiatives on the wholistic nature of learning and language such as the Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC) which had achieved improvements but it was widely believed that its implementation had been too dependent upon individual teacher initiatives which often had not received sufficient overt support and encouragement at the whole school level. Experience from involvement with ELIC suggested that the problem should be addressed more comprehensively as a whole school issue back at the educational bedrock of teaching principles and teaching methods.

In direct response to requests from schools Education Department officers devised a proposal for a radical refocus on the teaching of language and put this proposal to Government for support and the extra funding needed to enable the implementation process to be designed to ensure that the proposed approach was embedded in a whole school approach to the teaching of language. To capture the notion that this was a *back to basics* proposal it was titled *First Steps*. The proposal had as its goal:

> *To ensure that **all K-5 children, especially those at risk**, make measurable progress in the areas of mathematics and early literacy learning, and are able to sustain that progress in their later primary years.*

The project that evolved spread rapidly across schools in Western Australia. In 1994 three research projects were commissioned to document the origins of the project and the extent to which schools had adopted its materials and recommended procedures.

- The first project was to develop a history of First Steps from 1988 to 1994.
- The second was to survey 150 schools around the State to ask principals, teachers and parents about the extent to which First Steps was operating in the school, and what they considered had happened as a result.
- The third study was to document implementation of First Steps in twelve schools situated in widely differing parts of the State and having experienced differing modes of support in the adotion of First Steps methods, but which were regarded as having made **good progress** with the implementation process.

In view of the special focus that First Steps developed with regard to Aboriginal students, the data from the survey and case studies were re-analysed from the perspective of ELAN schools. This is the report of the information gathered about ELAN schools.

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDIES

The First Steps project had been the focus of a number of separate but related evaluation projects since it began in Western Australia in 1988. The results of some of these evaluations have been described in the history report mentioned in the Preface.

The purpose of the present report was to describe the extent to which parents, teachers and principals in ELAN schools considered that First Steps methods had been implemented in their schools, and to report their views on its effects on students' attitudes to learning and their learning outcomes.

This report combines the findings regarding ELAN schools from the survey and the case studies.

2.0 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The survey questionnaires sought information parents, teachers, principals and Focus Teachers regarding:

PART A - SCHOOL AND TEACHER DETAILS

1. Location of the school.
2. Size of the school.
3. Type of school.
4. Length of teaching experience
5. Length of time at the school
6. The year in which the school began with First Steps.
7. Special features (PSP, ELAN, PCAP, or Remote Area)
8. The Year levels presently taught
9. The parts of the school which are working with First Steps

PART B - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10. Ratings of the First Steps professional development programmes
11. Reasons for the ratings of the professional development programmes
12. Ratings of the components of the First Steps model in terms of their impact on the implementation of First Steps in the school.

PART C - EFFECTS ON TEACHING

13. The impact First Steps has had on teaching
14. Changes that have occurred to teaching
15. Ratings of the extent to which the components of the First Steps literacy programme have been implemented

PART D - EFFECTS ON STUDENT LEARNING AND ATTITUDES

16. Ratings of the impact of the First Steps literacy programme on student learning
17. Changes to students' attitudes to learning that have occurred as a result of First Steps
18. The impact of the First Steps literacy programme on student attitude to and confidence in language
19. Examples where First Steps has helped individual students
20. The impact of First Steps on students' use of language strategies
21. The effect of First Steps on the school as a whole
22. How people feel about First Steps

The case studies sought information regarding:

1. When did this school begin with First Steps?
2. Prior to starting First Steps what was the structure of the Literacy programme?
3. What Professional Development in First Steps has the school participated in?
4. What do staff think about First Steps?
5. To what extent have First Steps strategies been implemented?
6. What has changed as a result of First Steps?
7. What outcomes have resulted from First Steps?
8. What data do you have to show how outcomes are changing?
9. What have parents been told about First Steps?
10. What roles do parents play with regard to First Steps?
11. What do parents think about First Steps?
12. What have been the best aspects of being a First Steps school?
13. What is the future of First Steps in the school?
14. What still needs to be done in the school?

3.0 METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

Powered by extensive discussions within the Steering Committee, the projects passed through the following traditional steps:

- The purposes of each project were discussed and the research questions clarified. Then separate but similar questionnaire and interview questions addressing the above research questions were drafted for parents, principals, teachers, and Focus Teachers (these are selected teachers who have been trained to assist other teachers to implement the First Steps approach with their children).

- The list of schools to be contacted were decided in discussion with the Steering Committee. The samples were chosen so as to obtain:
  schools spread across the State,
  schools of various sizes, and
  schools which experienced different modes of introduction to the First Steps project.

  The sample for the survey was a true random selection within each section of the above sampling frame. The case study schools were selected from the sampling frame to choose schools that were considered to be making **good progress** with implementing First Steps.

- The draft instruments were refined with the assistance of the Steering Committee until they believe that the instruments ask the desired questions in a manner which were understood by the people completing them.

- The data tables into which the information were collated were drafted and the Steering Committee were invited to check that if those tables contained data, that they would answer the questions that the project seeks to address.

- A set of covering letters were prepared to describe the project and encourage people to see the purposes in participating.

- The questionnaires and letters were printed and dispatched with return envelopes. (Sample instruments and letters are contained in the appendix.) Case study schools were contacted by telephone and faxed information about the project and the interview questions.

- A reminder note was sent to schools thanking those who had returned their questionnaires and urging those who had not to post them soon.

- The full set of the resulting data were analysed and then described in separate reports. The draft were given to the Steering Committee for comment before finalisation. Then the data from ELAN schools were reanalysed and compared with the overall data to present the situation with regard to the implementation of First Steps in ELAN schools.

4.0 RESULTS

The questionnaires were sent to 150 schools. Each school package sought replies from the principal, the Focus Teacher, five parents and five teachers. Replies were received from a total of 121 principals, 93 Focus Teachers, 353 teachers and 549 parents. This was a response rate of 81 per cent for principals, 62 per cent for Focus Teachers (not all of the schools had Focus Teachers) 47 per cent for teachers and 73 per cent for parents.

This total included 16 ELAN schools of which 14 were primary schools, one a district high school, and one a remote school. Nine were metropolitan schools and seven country schools (See Tables Pr4a and b below).

The full data set from the analysis of the replies from each group are shown in the tables in Appendix 1 to 4. In the interests of easy of reading, the collections of data tables have been left in the Appendix. The commentary that follows in this section includes only the most relevant of the data tables and refers readers to the Appendix.

Particularly important sections of the data have been highlighted with graphs.

When reading this commentary it is important to keep in mind that these are the opinions of the respondents such that differences of opinions across and even within schools are possible and reasonable.

PART A - SCHOOL AND TEACHER DETAILS

1. Locations, Types and Sizes of the schools that replied to the survey

Tables Pr1 (corresponding to Table 1 for Principals in Appendix 1), Pa1 (corresponding to Table 1 for Parents in Appendix 2 and also displayed below), Te1 (corresponding to Table 1 for Teachers in Appendix 3) and FT1 (corresponding to Table 1 for Focus Teachers in Appendix 4) show that the survey received replies from a range of metropolitan, country and remote country schools, and that these schools included a range of types of school which approximate the distribution of schools in Western Australia.

Table Pa1 Type of school

Type of School	Metro	Country	Remote	Total
Primary	309	159	22	490
District High	2	38	6	46
Other	3	2	8	13
Total	314	199	36	549

Tables Pr2 (shown below), Pa2, Te2 and FT2 show a similarly appropriate range of schools of various size.

Table Pr2 Size of school

Size of School	Metro	Country	Remote	Total
100 or less students	2	12	4	18
101 - 300 students	27	8	1	36
301 - 700 students	31	20		51
701 or more students	6	10		16

As the case study schools were selected, those results should be viewed as comments from schools making good progress with implementing First Steps. However, as the schools in the survey were chosen on the basis of a stratified random sample, this distribution of replies suggest that the data can reasonable be used as an indication of the balance of opinions of staff and parents in Western Australian schools. In any event, the general similarity in the replies when broken down by location, type and size shown later in the report render this not a contentious issue.

This report considers how the information from ELAN schools compares with that from other types of school. For a more complete analysis of the survey and case study data see those project reports.

Tables Pr4a and Pr4b (both shown below) display the whether the schools that replied were ELAN schools, Core Schools (ie were fully funded to participate in First Step), were Cell Schools (ie were partially funded), or were Associate Schools (ie paid for their own participation).

The questionnaire also asked people to show whether the school was associated the Priority Schools Project (PSP), or Priority Country Area Project (PCAP).

Table Pr4a Type of involvement with First Steps (by location)

	Metro	Country	Remote	Total
Core school	21	18	1	40
Cell school	14	8	1	23
Associate school	31	20	3	54
PSP school	18	12	1	31
ELAN school	9	6	1	16
PCAP school		16	4	20
Remote Country school			4	4

Table Pr4b Type of involvement with First Steps (by type of school)

	Primary	District High	Remote
Core school	34	4	2
Cell school	22		1
Associate school	48	4	2
PSP school	29		2
ELAN school	14	1	1
PCAP school	15	4	1
Remote Country school			4

2. Case study schools

The initial requirement for being selected as a case study school was that it was believed to be demonstrating **best practice** with First Steps methods. The project was to be a study of schools which were perceived as having implemented First Steps successfully. To be judged *successful* the school needed to have participated extensively in the First Steps professional development and then have made substantial progress with implementing First Steps procedures. This aspect of the selection process was decided on the basis of the information held by the Steering Committee members and those they consulted regarding the progress with implementation being made by First Steps schools.

The twelve case study schools were selected so as to have a spread across the State from the far north to near Albany. They included a small remote area school, special language schools, large country schools, and a range of metropolitan schools.

The schools were also chosen to obtain a range of different modes of introduction to the First Steps project. The schools included:

Core Schools (ie schools with students with most need, which were given full funding and support),
Cell Schools (ie schools with students with high levels of need, which were given partial funding and support),
Associate Schools (ie schools which had paid for their own professional development and Focus Teachers).
PSP (Priority Schools Program) schools
ELAN (English language) schools
ESL (English as a Second language) schools
PCAP (Priority Country Area) schools

To capture changes that had occurred with regard to the professional development aspects of the programme, the schools were also selected on the basis of the year in which they joined the First Steps programme.

Of the twelve case study schools seven were involved with the ELAN project.

School A — a large metropolitan primary school in a low SES area, with involvement with the PSP, ESL and ELAN programs, and which had been fully funded to participate in the First Steps program.

School B — an outer metropolitan primary school which had used school resources to supplement partial funding to participate in the First Steps program.

School C — a large metropolitan primary school which had partial funded to participate in the program.

School D — a metropolitan junior primary school with involvement with the PSP and ESL programs, and which had been fully funded to participate in the First Steps program.

School E	a large metropolitan primary school which had used school resources to participate in the program.
School F	a large metropolitan primary school which had used school resources to participate in the program.
School G	a metropolitan primary school with involvement with the PSP, ESL and ELAN programs, and which had been fully funded to participate in the First Steps program.
School H	a country primary school with involvement with the PSP, ESL and ELAN programs, and which had been fully funded to participate in the First Steps program.
School I	a distant district high school with involvement with the PSP, ESL and ELAN programs, and which had been fully funded to participate in the First Steps program.
School J	a large country primary school with involvement with the PSP, ESL and ELAN programs, and which had been fully funded to participate in the First Steps program.
School K	a small remote community school with involvement with the PSP, ESL and ELAN programs, and which had been fully funded to participate in the First Steps program.
School L	a country primary school with involvement with the PSP, ESL and ELAN programs, and which had been fully funded to participate in the First Steps program.

In the sections which follow, the results for the ELAN schools in the survey are shown in comparison with the general results, and then the results from the case study schools are added as a comparison. Readers should remember that results from the case study schools are opinions from schools selected as demonstrating *good practice in the implementation of First Steps* and that the results from the survey represent the balance of opinions in schools around the State.

PART B - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

3. Ratings of the First Steps professional development programmes

Table Te6a (shown below) and Tables Pr6a-e and Ft6a-e (in the appendix) show responses regarding the perceived value of the First Steps professional development programmes.

Table 6a in each series shows frequencies (in percentages) of people who chose each possible reply, and the average of their answers. In the table below, a total of around 90 per cent of the teachers rated the First Steps professional development for **Spelling** as at least **quite valuable**, while more than half thought it was **very valuable** or **outstanding.**

The professional development for Writing received the highest rating with a mean score of 3.7 on the one to five scale, and almost 65 per cent rating it as **very valuable** or **outstanding**. The **Linking Day** received the lowest rating, nevertheless on average teachers considered it to have been **quite valuable.**

Less than one percent of the teachers thought that the professional development for Spelling, Writing, Reading or Oral Language was **of no value**, however six per cent of teachers gave the Linking Day this low rating, and a total of around 30 per cent questioned its value.

Table Te6a **Ratings of the First Steps professional development programmes**

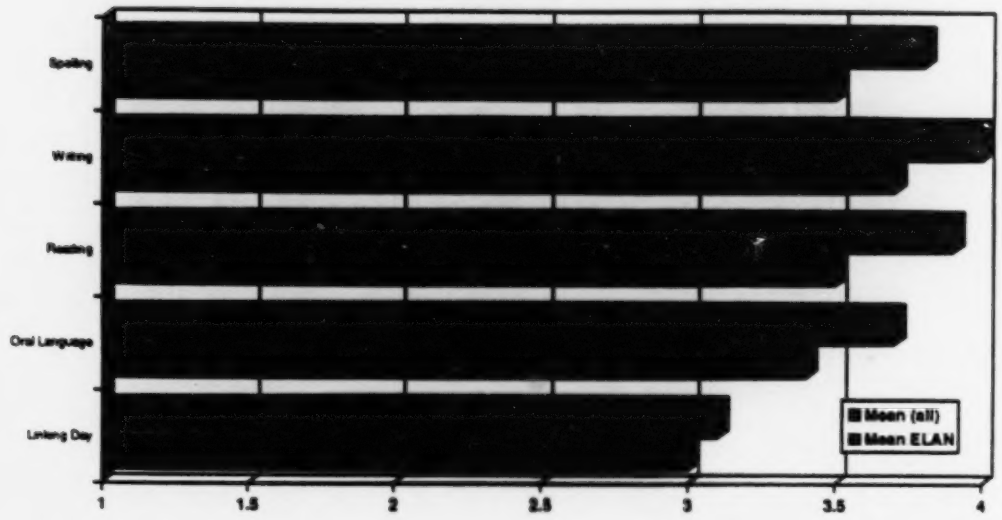
	of no value	not very valuable	quite valuable	very valuable	outstandingly valuable	Mean
Spelling	.3	10.4	39.1	41.8	8.5	3.5
Writing	.3	5.3	29.9	50.6	13.9	3.7
Reading	.6	8.4	38.3	43.5	9.1	3.5
Oral Language	.7	10.3	46.4	35.7	6.9	3.4
Linking Day	6.2	24.8	40.3	20.2	8.5	3.0

Table El6 (below) shows that teachers in ELAN schools were even more positive about the value of all aspects of the First Steps professional development than teachers generally.

Table El6 **Ratings of the First Steps professional development programmes by teachers in ELAN schools**

	Mean (all)	Mean ELAN
Spelling	3.5	3.8
Writing	3.7	4.0
Reading	3.5	3.9
Oral Language	3.4	3.7
Linking Day	3.0	3.1

Figure 1: Teachers' ratings of the First Steps professional development



4. Ratings of the components of the First Steps model in terms of their impact on the implementation of First Steps in the school.

Table Te6f (shown below) and Pr6f and FT6f (in the appendix) show ratings of the impact of aspects of the First Steps model on its implementation.

It should be noted that the column showing the percentage of respondents who say they have not experienced a particular aspect of the model is independent of the other row percentages. For example, 65.7 per cent of the teachers said they had not had a collaborative teacher. Of those who had, around 45 per cent rated them as *very valuable* or *outstandingly valuable*, and more than 80 per cent thought they were at least *quite valuable*.

The mean scores show that the highest ratings were given to the ELAN teachers and to the First Steps professional development programmes. Almost as high ratings were given to the Focus A Teachers as a source of advice.

Given the results whereby around two thirds of the teachers rated all aspects of the model as at least *quite valuable*, it is noteworthy that 20 per cent or more of the teachers *who had experienced that aspect of the model* rated the collaborative teacher or Focus Teacher providing classroom support or model lessons as *not very valuable* or *of little value*.

Table Te6f **Ratings of aspects of the First Steps model in terms of their impact on the implementation of First Steps (percentages and means)**

	not had	of no value	not very valuable	quite valuable	very valuable	outstandingly valuable	Mean
ELAN teacher	85.7		11.5	30.8	40.4	17.3	3.6
Professional Development courses	12.6	.9	7.5	35.2	44.0	12.3	3.6
Focus A Teachers - as a source of advice	15.7	4.2	9.4	36.2	35.2	15.0	3.5
Collaborative teachers	65.9	7.3	12.9	36.3	32.3	11.3	3.3
The First Steps School Development Officers	26.3	6.0	16.4	39.9	31.3	6.3	3.2
Focus A Teachers - to arrange In-class support	29.7	11.7	13.7	35.2	30.5	9.0	3.1
Focus A Teachers - to provide Model lessons	42.9	14.4	18.3	32.7	25.0	9.6	3.0

Again Table El6 (below) shows that teachers in ELAN schools valued all aspects of the First Steps model even more highly than teachers generally.

Table El6 **Teachers' ratings of aspects of the First Steps model in terms of their impact on the implementation of First Steps**

	Mean (all)	ELAN Mean
ELAN teacher	3.6	4.0
Professional Development courses	3.6	4.1
Focus A Teachers - as a source of advice	3.5	3.7
Collaborative teachers	3.3	3.4
The First Steps School Development Officers	3.2	3.3
Focus A Teachers - to arrange In-class support	3.1	3.1
Focus A Teachers - to provide Model lessons	3.0	3.0

The opinions of the Focus Teachers and principals shown in Tables FT6f and Pr6 follow similar patterns.

5. Case study schools staff opinions about First Steps

Notwithstanding that only schools believed to be examples of best practice with the implementation of First Steps were selected as case study schools, the full range of possible opinions about First Steps were expressed by teachers. It was clear that if there was a developmental continuum showing teachers' adoption of First Steps practices, the teachers in the case study schools would be spread right across it.

Some teachers expressed concern about the suitability of the Oral Language Indicators for Aboriginal students. One school developed its own *English Speaking Board* to assist Aboriginal students.

Table CS4 (below) shows a summary of the replies from ELAN case study schools regarding how staff feel about First Steps.

Table CS4 Case study ELAN schools staff opinions about First Steps

School	Location	Funding	Opinions
A	metro	fully	Most receptive, some cautious, Focus Teachers were the key to acceptance
G	metro Special Language Center	fully	Some teachers were resistant, some still opt out. Some are excited and enthusiastic.
H	country primary	fully	A change for the better. It feels good. Writing has given us a structure. Children need more phonic skills.
I	district high ELAN	fully	Initially threatened, now very positive, enthusiastic converts! Fantastic! Only way to go! Takes a long time and its hard work. Based on very good practices in a sound framework.
J	large country primary	fully	Most teachers very positive. Some reluctant to adopt.
K	remote community school ELAN	fully	Very good strategies and record keeping. Transient Aboriginal population so First Steps records can follow them. Problems using the Mathematics material.
L	country primary	fully	All teachers have embraced First Steps.

PART C - EFFECTS ON TEACHING

6. The impact of First Steps on teaching

Table Te7a (shown below) and TF7a (in the appendix) show the results to one of the most important questions in the survey, "Has First Steps affected teaching?".

Table Te7a shows that more than 80 per cent of teachers rated it as causing at least a moderate amount of change to their:

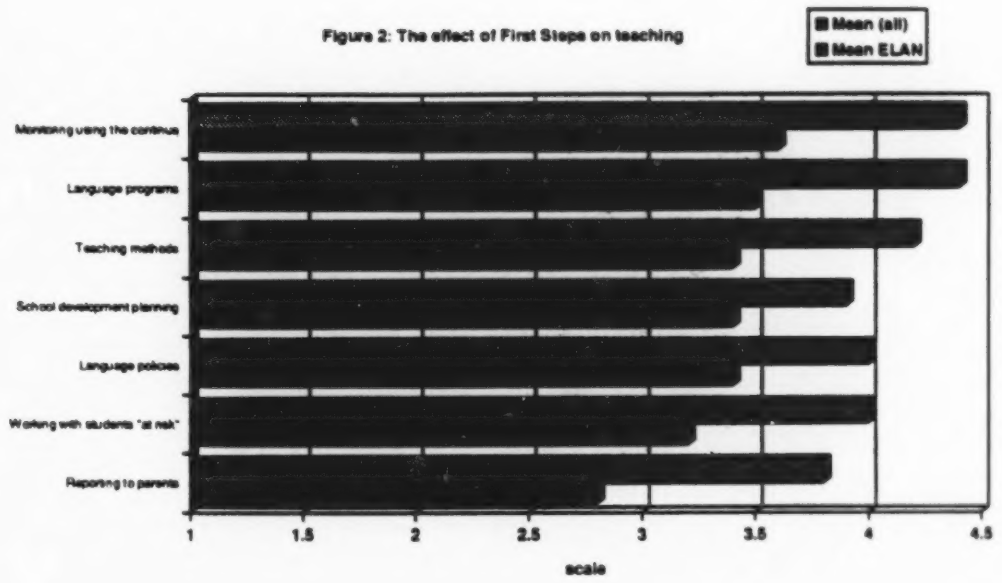
School development planning
Language policies
Language programs
Teaching methods
Monitoring using the continua
Working with students "at risk"

This surely is a powerful finding for the First Steps programme. However, inspecting the mean scores shows that teachers in ELAN schools *gave higher ratings than teachers generally to all aspects of the impact of First Steps on their teaching.* This suggests that they considered that First Steps had particular relevance to teaching children who needed extra assistance with learning English.

Table Te7a The impact First Steps has had on teaching

	No change	Very little change	Moderate amount of change	A considerable degree of change	Major change	Mean (all)	Mean ELAN
Monitoring using the continua	4.0	11.7	26.5	33.9	23.9	3.6	4.4
Language programs	2.2	11.8	33.1	39.0	13.8	3.5	4.4
Teaching methods	2.0	13.0	39.0	35.3	10.7	3.4	4.2
School development planning	3.7	13.8	32.2	38.2	12.1	3.4	3.9
Language policies	4.5	14.2	33.4	37.1	10.8	3.4	4.0
Working with students "at risk"	4.0	16.2	43.1	28.3	8.4	3.2	4.0
Reporting to parents	11.7	28.7	31.8	21.8	6.0	2.8	3.8

Figure 2: The effect of First Steps on teaching



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7. Ratings of the extent to which the components of the First Steps literacy programme have been implemented

Another key question in the survey related to the extent to which First Steps had been implemented. Table Pr13a (below) and Figure 1 show that around **80 per cent** of the principals considered that the implementation of First Steps practices was **well under way** or **established** for Spelling. The figures for Writing, Reading and Oral Language were around 85, 70 and 50 per cent respectively.

Again the mean scores in ELAN schools were similar or higher than for school generally. The greatest differences were in Writing and Reading, where ELAN schools claimed substantially more progress with implementation than schools generally.

Table Pr13a **Ratings of the extent to which the First Steps literacy programme has been implemented**

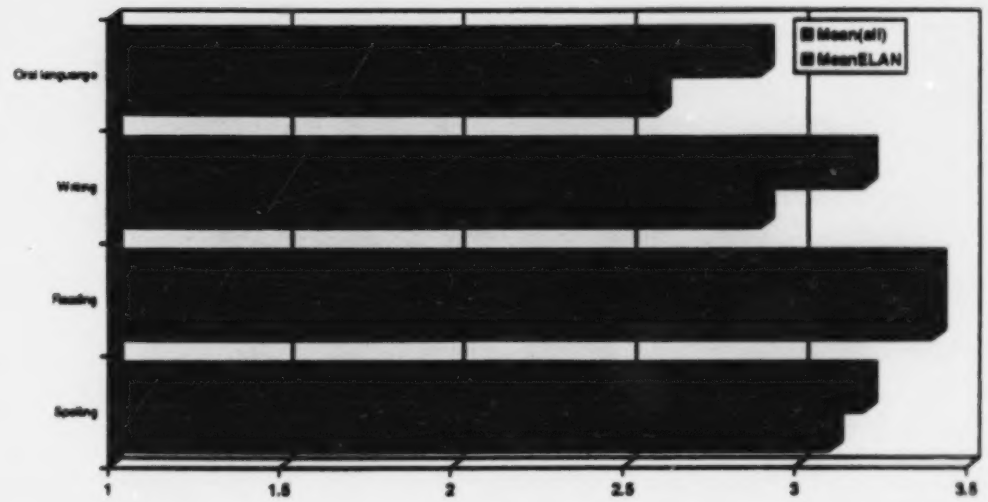
	Not had yet	Not started	Just beginning	Well under way	Established	Mean (all)	Mean ELAN
Spelling	8.3	2.7	18.9	36.9	41.4	3.2	3.1
Writing	7.5	1.8	13.4	42.0	42.9	3.3	3.7
Reading	13.3	4.8	22.9	47.6	24.8	2.9	3.3
Oral Language	12.4	29.2	31.1	22.6	17.0	2.3	2.3

The results from teachers (Table Te9a below) were similar to those of the principals.

Table Te9a **Ratings of the extent to which the First Steps literacy programme has been implemented**

	Not had yet	Not started	Just beginning	Well under way	Established	Mean (all)	Mean ELAN
Spelling	8.5	2.4	21.9	34.7	40.7	3.1	3.2
Writing	7.4	.3	13.9	34.6	50.9	3.4	3.4
Reading	13.7	8.0	27.4	31.2	33.4	2.9	3.2
Oral Language	19.7	3.7	38.0	27.1	21.2	2.6	2.9

Figure 3: Teachers ratings of the implementation of First Steps strategies



8. Implementation in ELAN case study schools

In some case study schools, to lessen the workload, it had been agreed that children would be placed on the continuum in only one or two aspects of language (eg Writing and Spelling) or only *students at risk* need be put on the continuum. In some cases the children who were not seen as *at risk* were placed only with regard to the Key Indicators. In these circumstances most teachers had found the workload reasonable (if they could get assistance when needed).

In case study schools that had advocated all students being placed on all of the continua it was common for teachers to express concern at the workload.

When discussing coming to know about and use First Steps one teacher said:

> *I found Reading hard, Writing easier, and Spelling easy. I am using it in all these areas, but I don't know what other teachers do.*

It became apparent that teachers had different interpretations of what it meant to be *using First Steps*. Teachers were not clear as to whether it meant to place children on the continuum, to plan teaching from the continuum placements, to use First Steps teaching strategies, or to place, plan, teach and report on the basis of the continuum.

Perhaps due to the lack of clarity and the demands of time a few teachers were completing the continua and then storing them in the cupboard until the next time for placing students.

In many of the schools at least some of the teachers, and those mainly in the upper primary year levels, were marking at least some of the children on the continua, and were then using the continuum as a way of recording student progress, but did not use them as a basis for planning their teaching.

> *We have all children placed on all the continua (except Maths). We are still clarifying some of the Indicators. Now we are beginning to look at classroom practice. It was too threatening to start with classroom practice. It has taken all this time to get this far.*

> *We place all children twice a year in Spelling and Writing. Teachers use strategies in these areas because it is school policy. Some might just put the continua in the cupboard.*

A principal stated:

> *We are not a First Steps school! We are a school that uses some First Steps ideas. We see it as a tool, but we still teach some Single Sounds, tables, have a support group, etc. We don't want to be locked into one method.*

One teacher stated:

> *Direct Instruction is still alive and well in some classes, in others there is still a Quiet Classroom with children afraid to talk.*

It became clear that in some schools teachers decided for themselves how fast and to what extent they would proceed with implementing First Steps procedures. For example, teachers said:

> *I don't implement all First Steps. I take what I can. I can't start 50 strategies. Its too hard. I'm learning as fast as I can.*
> *We still teach single sounds,.*
> *Its a case of HAVE A GO for teachers.*

In other schools there was more shared discussion about what they were actually trying now and going to try next.

One school with mostly Aboriginal children considered that the Oral Language module was not suitable for their children as many could not get started on the continuum. However they considered that their teaching of other subject areas including social Studies, Health, and Science was now based upon First Steps principles.

Table CS5 shows the extent to which ELAN case study schools have implemented First Steps procedures.

Table CS5 Extent of implementation of First Steps strategies in ELAN case study schools

School	Location	Funding	Extent of implementation
A	metro	fully	Focussing on children at risk, but all children on Reading and Writing continua. Most teachers applying some aspects. Placing all children on one Maths outcome.
G	metro Special Language Center	fully	Students in the Special Language Center usually can't start the continuum. Oral Language doesn't fit our children. Use of continua and strategies negotiable with other teachers.
H	country primary	fully	Trying to do it all. Trying to use the strategies. Changing the report format. Writing policies. Parent involvement
I	district high ELAN	fully	Spelling, Reading, Writing, Oral Language all being used. Now trying to refine and improve their use. Teachers must have a sound understanding of one module before moving onto the next. Strategies going so well. Plotting all children on Key Indicators in Writing. At risk students plotted on all indicators.
J	large country primary	fully	Most teachers are using it to some extent - some enthusiastically, some reluctantly.
K	remote community school ELAN	fully	Spelling, Reading, Writing, Oral Language all being used. Children placed on continua in all areas except Oral Language which is not suitable for Aboriginal children.
L	country primary	fully	First Steps implemented K-7 in Writing and Reading. Strategies only used in Oral Language.

PART D - EFFECTS ON STUDENT LEARNING AND ATTITUDES

9 Parent Awareness of First Steps

Almost all of the parents who completed the survey had been informed that their school was using First Steps methods in Literacy (see Table Pa2a-b below). This is not a surprising finding as only a few parents were selected at each school and it would be natural for principals to select parents who were commonly at the school.

As parents could not be expected to know whether their school was an ELAN school, the information from the parent questionnaire can not show separate results for ELAN schools, however as more than half of the case study schools were associated with the ELAN project it is possible to report the view of parents shown below.

All of the case study schools had attempted to inform parents that the school was implementing the First Steps program. One school said their first evening was so over subscribed that they had to hold two separate groups. Even so they estimated that with all of their efforts they had reached only 40 to 50 per cent of the parents, and that while some had quickly *got the picture*, understood the continuum and started trying to work out where their child fitted, others had very limited understandings as to why the school was telling them about it.

This estimate was supported by the interviews with parents. Notwithstanding in some cases:

- several parent meetings,
- the distribution of **Parent Packs**,
- building information about First Steps into the initial meeting between parents and the classroom teacher at the beginning of the year,
- telling new parents about First Steps,
- sending work samples home regularly, and
- mentioning what the school was doing with regard to First Steps in the newsletter,

some of the parents interviewed nevertheless had little idea of what the First Steps program was, or how it might affect the education of their children.

The range of comments from interviews included:

- *We know its developmental and that that is good for our child, but we are not sure what that really means,*
- *I don't know what First Steps is and what it is not, but the teachers here at a good bunch and if they say it is good, we trust them. It's their job to know.*
- *The evening meetings are hard to get to,*
- *Day time meetings are impossible to get to if you work,*
- *My husband would have gone Huh!*
- *We saw our child's slow label gradually disappear.*

A few parents who were particularly pleased about First Steps claimed that it had especially suited their child:

- *... is not very bright. He is struggling even now, but he would have dropped his bundle in a traditional class. His self-esteem has blossomed. He is happy working at his own pace. The other kids don't take any notice. They are all doing their own thing.*

- *I had always felt that ... had been held back by the rest of the class. Now she can rattle along as she likes. And she is!*

- *Our child was shy. There were tears most mornings. Children teased her, saying she couldn't do anything. She became withdrawn and would not talk. But she is now allowed to work at her own pace and children can't tell her work is different. She is a different girl. Now she can't be shut up. She stands up to other children and won't be put down.*

A distant country ELAN school had prepared a video on First Steps and used this as part of the means of informing parents and the community. At interview the parents all mentioned the video. Another quite large country school reported that all of the families in the school attended the parent activity session.

Table CS9 summarises how parents have been informed about First Steps.

Table CS9 How parents have been told about First Steps

School	Location	Funding	Communication with Parents
A	metropolitan	fully funded	Parent meetings, parent training workshop
G	metropolitan	fully funded	Parent meetings with interpreters, mostly the English speaking parents came.
H	country primary	fully funded	Parent meetings, Parent Pack, Parent networks. Teacher meetings. Work samples go home. Not a lot of interest.
I	distant district high ELAN	fully funded	Parent meetings, Parent Packs, teacher meetings, Open Classrooms twice a year, training workshop for Year 1 parents. Video on First Steps. Aboriginal parent and Elan workshops well attended.
J	large country primary	fully funded	Parent meetings, parent Packs, teacher meetings. Linked to reports.
K	remote community school ELAN	fully funded	Parents have been told that we are using First Steps but are not sure what it is all about. Parents leave the job to the teachers. Given out Parent Packs but most parents can not read it.
L	country primary	fully funded	**All families and all staff attended parent meeting!**

10. Ratings of the impact of the First Steps literacy programme on student learning

Overall, teachers gave similar ratings to parents about the impact of First Steps on students learning. (See Table Te10a below). More than 30 per cent claimed that First Steps had been a **major assistance with students learning about Writing** and over 85 per cent said it had been some assistance.

More than two thirds of the teachers thought that First Steps had been at least some assistance with students learning in all of the aspects of language. The areas of Oral Language was thought to have had least impact, perhaps because many of the schools were not as far into implementing that aspect of the First Steps programme.

Table Te10a Ratings the impact of the First Steps literacy programme on student learning

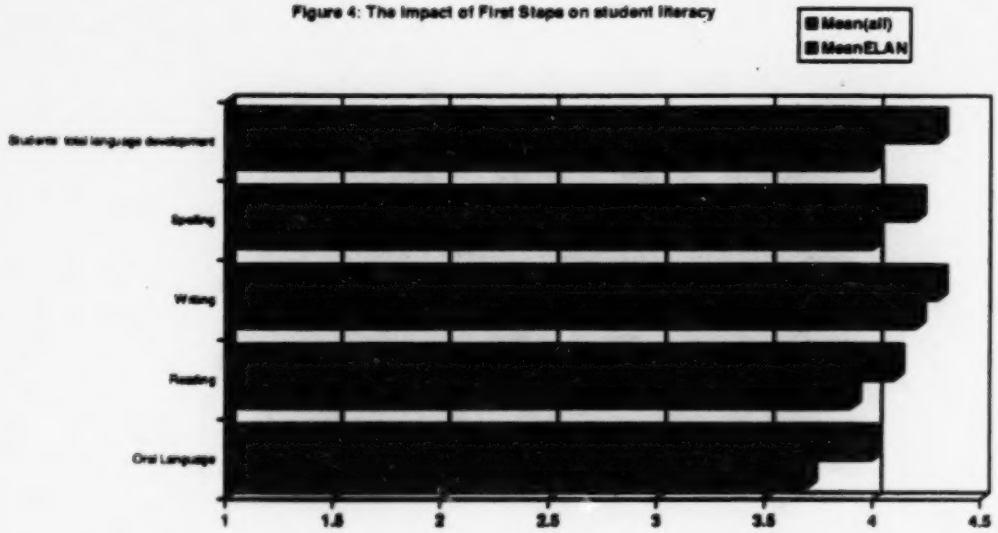
	Much less progress with student learning	Less progress with student learning	No noticeable effect	Some assistance with student learning	Major assistance with student learning	Mean
Students' total language development	.3		17.1	62.0	20.6	4.0
Spelling	.9	.6	19.6	57.5	21.2	4.0
Writing	.6	.3	12.0	55.6	31.5	4.2
Reading	.7	.7	27.0	53.9	17.7	3.9
Oral Language	1.6	1.9	29.2	55.6	11.7	3.7

Again Table E110 (below) shows that the principals in ELAN schools give higher ratings than principals generally to the impact of each aspect of the First Steps Literacy programme on student learning.

Table E110a Teachers' ratings the impact of the First Steps literacy programme on student learning

	Mean (all)	Mean ELAN
Students' total language development	4.0	4.3
Spelling	4.0	4.2
Writing	4.2	4.3
Reading	3.9	4.1
Oral Language	3.7	4.0

Figure 4: The impact of First Steps on student literacy



ESL and ELAN children were held by many of those interviewed to benefit especially from the modelling and clear frameworks encouraged by First Steps. It was noted however that a few teachers (not in ELAN schools) held the opposite view and made statements such as *Of course it does not work with Aboriginal children.*

Table CS6 shows the changes ELAN case study schools say they have made as a result of First Steps.

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Table CS6 Changes as a result of First Steps in ELAN case study schools

School	Location	Funding	Changes
A	metro	fully	Increased teaching of children from where they presently are.
G	metro Special Language Center	fully	Strategies not new but it legitimises what we do. Teachers more focussed on what they do. Whole school working to one philosophy of language with similar methods.
H	country primary	fully	Given structure to Writing. Reading more enjoyable. Spelling student centred. More resources required and available. Extra teaching time needed. Language as a whole has changed.
I	district high ELAN	fully	Collaborative planning. Great resources. Continuity of policies, vocabulary and teaching strategies in language across the school. More group work. Increased sharing -even with other schools.
J	large country primary	fully	School Development Plan more cohesive. More of a whole language approach.
K	remote community school ELAN	fully	Much more Writing being done. More integration of subjects. Greater continuity of programming.
L	country primary	fully	Written language more structured now we have frameworks. Less use of standardised tests.

A consistent response from case study schools regarding the outcomes of working with First Steps was that children's self-esteem was much higher, they were happier and their attitude to learning was more positive. They experienced more success so felt better about school and learning.

Teachers considered that the **Have a go** approach had created a lot more confidence to risk learning without fear of failure.

- *There was increased acceptance that its OK to make mistakes.*
- *Children more willing to experiment with language.*
- *More children are active in their learning and willing to use language more - especially in the lower grades.*
- *Teachers are more conscious of working with language, so experiment more and children become more conscious also.*

Parents and teachers remarked that as each group was working on different activities, weak children could be catered for in the class without it being obvious that they are on different work.

> *They do not see one child getting eight out of ten when they are getting only two. He sits there with the others. He doesn't know he is different.*

Removing the boundaries between traditional subject areas and trying fresh teaching strategies had resulted in previously uninterested students passing comments like **Is this Reading? It is good!**

One aspect of children's increased confidence was thought to derive from their increasing knowledge of strategies they can try. One teacher said:

- *They know they have a range of strategies which they can apply in situations like this - for example Read On. They feel confident of being able to find one that is appropriate and feel responsible for their own learning.*
- *I'm doing a lot more modelling, more Step-by-step, more group work, and more discussion. It may take three weeks to teach a form of writing that would have taken one lesson, but now they remember it.*
- *By teaching them to recognize the strategies, we are giving children the learning skills they will need in later education.*
- *Children are starting to actually think!*

Schools with Aboriginal students claimed that the First Steps strategies were equally suitable for these students. In the school with the Special Language and ESL Centers teachers noted that the focus on the language of Mathematics had been particularly beneficial to the students.

Table CS7 shows the outcomes ELAN schools have reported as a result of implementing First Steps.

Table CS7 Outcomes that have resulted from First Steps in ELAN case study schools

School	Location	Funding	Outcomes
A	metro	fully	Improved interest in and attitude to learning, more confidence, better behaviour.
G	metro Special Language Center	fully	The language of Mathematics particularly helpful to ESL children. Changes will take time to show. Students' self-esteem improved.
H	country primary	fully	Improved structure giving students increased confidence and better output - especially in writing. Works equally well for ESL and Aboriginal students.
I	district high ELAN	fully	Improved understanding of structures for Writing and consequent improvement in Writing skills. Improved group skills. Aboriginal students improved markedly.
J	large country primary	fully	Improved outcomes in Oral Language. Gives children a fresh chance. Old methods compound failure. Children more confident. Children who would not write are now **having a go**.
K	remote community school ELAN	fully	Improved student performance. Improved student attitudes. Children more willing to **have a go**. Children working at own pace. Clear records showing where children are.
L	country primary	fully	Improved student performance. Improved student attitudes. Excellent for children at risk and gifted children.

11. Data regarding changing outcomes

Most of the case study schools were not very interested in the question of whether there was any formal data to support their judgements that children were making better progress because of their use of First Steps procedures. Teachers typically made comments like:

You only have to look at them working and see their work to see the difference.
Just look at the variety in their Writing.
I suppose you could look at work samples over several years.
Most of us have seen children produce things we did not think they could.
I've been teaching Years 4/5 for six years so I'd know.

The children's progress along the continua was seen by most of the teachers interviewed as showing that children were making sound progress. Some of the schools had enough information on computer to be able to demonstrate the extent to which children had progressed along the continua in several aspects of language.

Table CS8 lists the basis upon which ELAN case study schools can judge how well students are progressing using First Steps.

Table CS8 Data regarding changing outcomes in ELAN case study schools

School	Location	Funding	Outcomes
A	metropolitan	fully funded	Progress along the continuum, Teachers' professional judgement.
G	metropolitan Special Language Center	fully funded	Progress along the continua, work samples, and anecdotal records. I'm an old teacher, I can tell. I have more skills. I know I'm doing it better.
H	country primary	fully funded	Progress along the continua, work samples, and anecdotal records. OSMIS data places us above the State average - attributable to First Steps.
I	distant district high ELAN	fully funded	High school says Writing has improved. Attitudinal changes in students, staff and parents. Progress along the continua, work samples, and anecdotal records.
J	large country primary	fully funded	Progress along the continuum, Teachers' professional judgement, Work samples
K	remote community school ELAN	fully funded	Progress along the continua, work samples, and anecdotal records. Observation. Testing is still important but many centrally made tests are not suitable for our Aboriginal children.
L	country primary	fully funded	Progress along the continuum, Teachers' professional judgement, Work samples, MIS data

12. The impact of the First Steps literacy programme on student attitude to and confidence in language

Table Te12 below shows teachers' ratings of the impact of First Steps on students' attitude to and confidence in aspects of language. It shows that Writing has had most impact (80 per cent rating student attitude as **more positive** or **much more positive**) and Oral Language has had least impact (nearly 60 per cent rating it as **more positive** or **much more positive**).

Table Te12 Ratings the impact of the First Steps literacy programme on student attitude to and confidence in each aspect of language

	Not covered	Much less positive	Less positive	No effect	More positive	Much more positive	Mean
Students' total language development	13.8		3	27.1	61.8	10.8	3.8
Spelling	12.4		3	27.0	58.9	13.8	3.9
Writing	10.4			20.9	61.3	17.8	4.0
Reading	20.6		1.0	34.3	56.4	8.3	3.7
Oral Language	31.1	.4	.8	39.8	47.8	11.2	3.7

Table E112 shows that teachers in ELAN schools gave similar ratings to teachers generally to the effects of First Steps on student attitude to and confidence in language.

Table E112 Ratings the impact of the First Steps literacy programme on student attitude to and confidence in each aspect of language

	Mean (all)	Mean ELAN
Students' total language development	3.8	3.8
Spelling	3.9	3.9
Writing	4.0	4.0
Reading	3.7	3.8
Oral Language	3.7	3.9

13. The impact of First Steps on students' use of language strategies

Table Te14 reports teachers' ratings of the impact of First Steps upon students' use of a range of language strategies. The table shows that **at least 75 per cent of teachers said there had been at least a moderate amount of change** in the use students made of all of the strategies, and at least a quarter of the teachers said there had been a considerable degree of change.

The highest levels of change were said to have occurred with regard to the strategies:

Text structures
Overall writing strategies
Planning strategies
Spelling strategies
Spelling journal

Table Te14 Ratings the impact of First Steps on students' use of the following strategies

	Not covered	No change	Very little change	Moderate amount of change	Considerable degree of change	Major change	Mean
Reading							
Meaning making strategies	38.6	4.6	16.9	52.3	23.5	2.7	3.0
Word identification strategies	27.7	4.2	19.0	46.0	28.5	2.3	3.1
Problem solving strategies	28.5	4.2	20.0	48.5	25.4	1.9	3.0
Writing							
Planning strategies	15.3	2.6	2.3	36.4	37.4	11.4	3.4
Editing strategies	17.3	3.3	17.3	44.2	26.2	9.0	3.2
Text structures	17.0	2.3	10.6	32.1	38.4	16.6	3.6
Overall writing strategies	14.3	2.6	10.6	35.9	39.4	11.5	3.5
Spelling							
Spelling strategies	16.8	2.3	11.9	42.9	34.7	8.3	3.3
Spelling journal	26.1	5.6	15.2	27.5	34.2	17.5	3.4

Table E114 and Figure 5 (below) repeat the now familiar result whereby teachers in ELAN schools give similar or higher ratings to teachers generally to the impact of First Steps on students' use of each of the language strategies listed.

Table E114 Ratings the impact of First Steps on students' use of the following strategies

	Mean (all)	Mean ELAN
Reading		
Meaning making strategies	3.0	3.3
Word identification strategies	3.1	3.4
Problem solving strategies	3.0	3.0
Writing		
Planning strategies	3.4	3.5
Editing strategies	3.2	3.4
Text structures	3.6	3.6
Overall writing strategies	3.5	3.7
Spelling		
Spelling strategies	3.3	3.5
Spelling journal	3.4	3.7

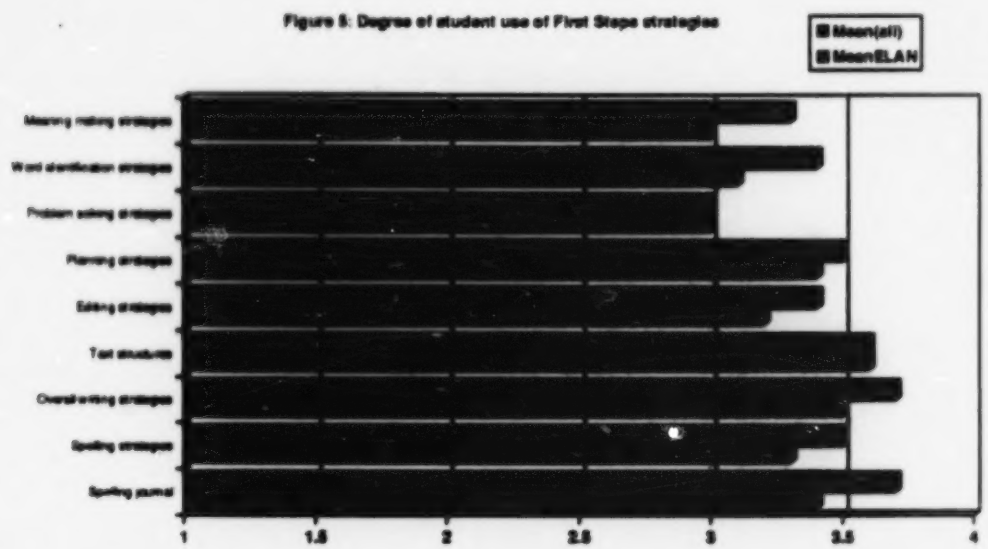

Figure 5: Degree of student use of First Steps strategies

14. The best aspects of implementing First Steps

Table CS12 shows the factors which ELAN case study schools have claimed to be the best aspects arising from implementing the First Steps programme.

Table CS12 Best aspects of being a First Steps school as suggested by ELAN case study schools

School	Location	Funding	Best aspects
A	metropolitan	fully funded	Improved student attitudes, increased teacher enjoyment, more team spirit among staff
G	metropolitan Special Language Center	fully funded	The resources and priority given to language. Collegial support. The collaborative teacher. Increased job satisfaction. Common purpose.
H	country primary	fully funded	The resource materials, the support. Teaching whole language! You start in the morning and go on without chopping it up.
I	distant district high ELAN	fully funded	Continuity of policy, vocabulary, strategies, and standards across the school. Students prepared to take risks in language. Parents say it brought them and the school more together as a co-operation.
J	large country primary	fully funded	Central Office and District Office support. Common vision and language. Collaborative effort. Feel successful as a teacher.
K	remote community school ELAN	fully funded	Excellent strategies and resources. Improved attitudes and outcomes. Continuity of programmes. Children feel successful.
L	country primary	fully funded	Learning very student centred. Staff very cohesive. Teaching strategies for problem solving. Greater insight into children because of the continua

15. The future of First Steps in ELAN case study schools

All of the case study schools considered that First Steps could only move forwards in the school.

Its part of our School Development Plan, so its here to stay.
It won't die here.

Some still had other modules to adopt and were planning for the necessary professional development.

We need now to do Oral Language.
I wish we knew what was happening in Maths.
Still a lot to do.
Reading in a bigger way.

However the problem of assisting new staff to catch up with the school's particular First Steps program was raised by several principals.

A particularly powerful comment about the future of First Steps was:

It won't be First Steps. It will be normal language teaching.

Case study schools with special focus areas such as ELAN said they intended to continue and expand these as they were becoming increasingly aware of the children's needs and the power of these approaches to assist them.

Table CS13 lists the steps ELAN case study schools say they still intend to take in implementing First Steps.

Table CS13 The future of First Steps in ELAN case study schools

School	Location	Funding	Future
A	metropolitan	fully funded	Consolidate, refine, Reading and Writing. Develop ELAN with Aboriginal children. Finish Maths and Oral Language
G	metropolitan Special Language Center	fully funded	It will keep happening. We will focus on one area at a time. We are committed as a school. Part of the School Development Plan.
H	country primary	fully funded	There will be a need to refresh, to keep building on what we know. Strong stable staff to keep it going.
I	distant district high	fully funded	Very positive future. First Steps will continue to drive the Literacy program. It will become more refined. Train new staff. Work on report format. Promote in community.
J	large country primary	fully funded	Need to polish. Build in student Outcome Statements. Put Reading on Hold. Question the Indicators. Teachers need time.
K	remote community school ELAN	fully funded	Whole staff transferring. It will depend upon the new staff. At a nearby school (sic!) successful First Steps implementation was lost when most of the staff changed.
L	country primary	fully funded	First Steps will continue. Language our priority in 1995. Consolidate Reading and Writing. No time yet for Spelling and Oral Language.

- **ELAN schools had made similar or greater progress than schools generally with regard to the extent to which the First Steps literacy programme has been implemented. The greatest differences were in Writing and Reading, where ELAN schools claimed substantially more progress with implementation than schools generally.**

- **principals in ELAN schools give higher ratings than principals generally to the impact of each aspect of the First Steps Literacy programme on student learning.**

- **teachers in ELAN schools gave similar positive ratings to teachers generally to the effects of First Steps on student attitude to and confidence in language.**

- **teachers in ELAN schools give similar or higher positive ratings to teachers generally to the impact of First Steps on students' use of each of the language strategies listed.**

The above five data sets all support the conclusion that First Steps strategies work even more successfully in ELAN schools than in schools generally.

5.0 CONCLUSION

It was surprising how many case study interviews finished with an emotional statement such as:

Great program! I love it.

If one were to select the teacher comments which best captured the prevailing (but by no means unanimous) attitude towards the experience of working with First Steps, they would be:

- *It has reminded us that teaching does not equal learning, and that we must move at a pace the child can handle.*
- *If you follow First Steps procedures there is success and children feel it and confidence grows. Nothing succeeds like success.*
- *It was the first quality professional development I've ever had.*

In noting the findings of the case studies it should be remembered that the information gathered in these 12 schools, selected as having made successful progress with implementing First Steps, included every possible shade of opinion.

First Steps was commonly stated as having a lot to offer children regarded as *at risk* for whatever reason. The data from ELAN case study schools shown above has illustrated the enthusiasm for the First Steps program shown by teachers in ELAN schools and the conviction they had that it had assisted their task in major ways. Yet the range of views across teachers in other schools was extreme.

It's no good for Aboriginal children.
It works particularly well with Aboriginal students.

The data from the survey of 150 schools provides a broader base from which to consider these perspectives and is able to show the balance of support between the perspectives. The summary of the results from ELAN case study schools shows that:

The four data sets: parents, principals, teachers and Focus Teachers all deliver the same message. They say that:

- **teachers in ELAN schools were even more positive about the value of all aspects of the First Steps professional development than teachers generally.**

- **teachers in ELAN schools valued all aspects of the First Steps model even more highly than teachers generally.**

- **teachers in ELAN schools *gave higher ratings than teachers generally to all aspects of the impact of First Steps on their teaching.* This suggests that they considered that First Steps had particular relevance to teaching children who needed extra assistance with learning English.**